

Montana Main Street 2009 Program Application Instructions

Application Due July 1, 2009



Montana Main Street
Montana Department of Commerce
Business Resources Division
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Montana Main Street

In 2005 the 59th Montana Legislature approved legislation to establish the Montana Main Street program. The purpose of the program is to assist Montana communities with revitalization of their historic downtown districts.

Administrated by the Montana Department of Commerce, the Montana Main Street program is modeled after the successful nationwide downtown revitalization program of the National Trust Main Street Center. The underlying premise is to encourage economic development within the context of historic preservation. The Main Street approach encourages communities to use their unique assets – distinctive architecture, pedestrian-friendly atmosphere, local ownership, and personal service – to rebuild their downtowns.

Currently, there are seven designated Main Street communities: Anaconda, Butte, Libby, Livingston, Polson, Red Lodge, and Stevensville. In addition, there are four affiliate communities: Columbus, Sheridan, West Yellowstone, and White Sulphur Springs.

For 2009, the Department of Commerce will select 2-3 communities to participate in the Montana Main Street program. The Montana Main Street program helps identify local needs and provides corresponding on-site consulting and training services. It also provides networking and advocacy to local programs. It promotes a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment, and rebuilding of historic commercial districts.

What is Main Street?

Developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Center, the Main Street Four-Point Approach focuses on four major areas: organization, promotions, economic restructuring, and design. Using the four areas or points, the program helps downtowns to capitalize on their unique historical, cultural, and architectural assets while also addressing the many economic development needs around small business retention and recruitment in light of strong competition from shopping malls and discount retailers.

Cumulatively, the 1,700 commercial districts taking part in the Main Street program have generated nearly 94,000 building rehabilitations and 231,000 new jobs over the last 20 years. Communities experience an average investment of more than \$9 million, with a return of \$28 for every \$1 spent on operation of a local program. These figures make the Main Street program ***one of the most successful economic development strategies in the United States.***

The Main Street Four Point Approach™

Organization: *How do you get everyone in the community working toward the goal of revitalizing your Main Street?* The organization committee establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among the various groups that have a stake in the commercial district. This will allow the Main Street revitalization program to provide effective, ongoing management and advocacy of the commercial district. Diverse groups from the public and private sectors must work together to create and maintain a successful program. The organization committee is also responsible for raising money for projects and administration, recruiting volunteers, managing staff and volunteers, and managing the finances.

Design: *How do you get Main Street back into top-notch physical shape?* The design committee focuses on creating an inviting atmosphere through more appealing window displays, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, street lights, storefronts, merchandising, etc. It aims to educate people about design quality, and to expedite commercial district improvements.

Promotions: *How do you attract potential shoppers, investors, and entrepreneurs?* The promotions committee develops and implements promotional strategies that create a positive image of downtown through advertising, special events, and retail promotions.

Economic Restructuring: *How do you find a new niche for Main Street and its businesses?* The economic restructuring committee focuses on strengthening the commercial district's existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. This is accomplished by retaining and expanding existing businesses to provide a balanced commercial mix, by converting unused or underutilized space into productive property, and by sharpening the competitiveness and merchandising skills of community business people.

The Eight Principles of Commercial District Revitalization

While the Main Street approach provides the format for successful revitalization, implementation of the four-point approach is based on eight principles that pertain to all areas of the revitalization effort:

Comprehensive process. Community business district revitalization is a complex process and cannot be accomplished through a single project. For successful long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach must be used.

Incremental in nature. Small projects and simple activities lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the revitalization process and help to develop skills so that more complex problems can be addressed and more ambitious projects undertaken.

Community empowerment. Local leaders must have the desire and the will to make the project successful. The National Main Street Center and the Montana Main Street program will provide direction, ideas and training, but continued and long-term success depends upon the involvement and commitment of the community.

Public/private partnerships. Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the economic health and physical viability of traditional commercial districts. Each sector has a role to play, and each must understand the other's strengths and limitations so that an effective partnership can be forged.

Identifying and capitalizing on existing assets. Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them unique. Every district has unique qualities — like distinctive buildings and human scale that give people a sense of belonging. These local assets must serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.

Quality. Quality must be emphasized in every aspect of the revitalization program. This applies equally to each element of the program, from storefront design to promotional campaigns to educational programs.

Change. Changes in attitude and practice are necessary to improve current economic conditions. Public support for change will build as the program grows.

Implementation-oriented. Activity creates confidence in the program and ever-greater levels of participation. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization effort is under way. Small projects at the beginning of the program pave the way for larger activities as the revitalization effort matures.

The Local Program

To address the Four Points in a comprehensive manner, local Main Street programs develop a broad-based governing board and standing committees to address design, economic restructuring, promotions, and organization. Volunteers work to implement projects in these four areas. Volunteer efforts and projects are coordinated by a part-time or full-time paid program director that is hired by the local Main Street organization.

The Main Street Four-Point Approach is incremental and will not produce dramatic, wholesale change immediately. If the revitalization of downtown is to succeed and endure, it must be comprehensive, incremental and address each of Main Streets four points, making lasting positive changes over time. The process requires leadership plus the financial and philosophical commitment of both public and private sectors.

Services of Montana Main Street

The Department of Commerce provides technical assistance to communities that are selected for the Montana Main Street program. Through Montana Main Street and the National Trust Main Street Center, intensive on-site technical assistance and training is provided to selected communities for a minimum of three years of the program. Services include:

Pre-Montana Main Street Designation

- Information presentation(s) to inform communities about Montana Main Street – presentations regionally and in requested communities.
- Information and materials about Montana Main Street.

Designated Montana Main Street Programs – Year One

- **Start-up Visit** - Guidance on structuring an effective downtown revitalization program, the hiring of local staff and the publicizing of the program; establishment of a short-term organizational work plan.
- **Main Street Basic Training** – Intended for staff, board members, and volunteers, basic training covers the four Main Street areas (promotions, economic restructuring, design, and organization).
- **Work Plan Development** – Creation of a mission statement, goals, and work plans in each of the four Main Street areas (promotions, economic restructuring, design, and organization).
- **Phone Conferences** – Participation in monthly phone conferences with all Main Street communities.
- **National Main Street Network Membership** – The Montana Main Street program will pay for membership for the first year. Members receive a monthly magazine from the National Main Street Center and have access to the members-only part of the Center's website.

Designated Montana Main Street Programs – Years Two and Three

- **Issue-Specific Technical Assistance and Training** – Specialized on-site consulting and training for specific issues, such as streetscape, merchandising, upper floor development, fundraising, volunteer recruitment & retention. Training topics are chosen by the local Main Street communities to best fit their needs.
- **Participation in Monthly Phone Conferences**
- **Free Registration for Annual Montana Main Streets Conference**
- **Free Registration for Attendance at National Main Streets Conference**
- **Work Plan Development**, as needed.

The Selection Process

Applicant communities must submit a formal written application.

Following the application deadline, applications will be reviewed and evaluated by the Montana Main Street Advisory Committee. Each applicant community will be invited to make a brief presentation at the Montana Main Street Advisory Committee selection meeting in August.

The Advisory Committee will review applications prior to presentations, ask additional questions during the presentation and will recommend to the Director of the Department of Commerce which communities to be selected. The Director of the Department of Commerce will announce selected communities in September.

Application Submission

Completed applications must be in the offices of the Montana Department of Commerce or postmarked by close of business on **Wednesday, July 1, 2009**. Late applications will not be considered.

Applications should be submitted to:

Julie Burk
Montana Main Street Coordinator
Montana Department of Commerce
Business Resource Division
301 S. Park Avenue
P.O. Box 200505
Helena, Montana 59620

An application is considered complete if all questions are answered, all attachments requested in the application are included, and the original application and 10 copies are submitted.

Advisory Committee Selection Meeting

The Montana Main Street Advisory Committee will meet to review submitted applications. Each applicant community will be invited to make a brief presentation (15-20 minutes). The committee discusses all criteria of each applicant and is given the opportunity to change a community's score (criterion scores and totals) following its presentation.

Scores are totaled and reported, any motions taken by the Advisory Committee members in regard to selection recommendations will be recorded with explanations for each motion. The Advisory Committee selection recommendations are forwarded to the Director of the Department of Commerce for final selection.

Announcement

The Director of the Department of Commerce will make the official announcement of communities chosen for the Montana Main Street Program in September 2009.

General Selection Criteria

The following general criteria will be used to evaluate all Main Street applications.

1. Strong commitment from various public and private sector entities. A broad-based foundation of merchant organizations, community organizations, schools, religious institutions, property owners, residents, civic groups, financial institutions, should be willing to work together to support a local Main Street program for a minimum of three years.
2. An adequate local budget and evidence of funding commitments to fund the local program for a minimum of three years.
3. A commitment by the community to employ a paid program director (part-time or full-time) for at least three years.
4. The existence of, or willingness to establish, a private non-profit corporation that is locally designated as the governing body and policy board for the local Main Street program.
5. The community's true need for commercial district revitalization.
6. The likelihood that demonstrable change will occur in the commercial district as a result of the community's participation in Montana Main Street.
7. Past history of community revitalization or commercial district economic development efforts.
8. The existence of local historic preservation activity and architecturally or historically significant commercial buildings in commercial district, including buildings or districts in the local or National Register of Historic Places.
9. Current community demographics, such as business mix, housing, size, and position of the commercial district.
10. The community's readiness to begin a Main Street program.

Application Overview

Section 1 – Introductory Questions

This section is not scored.

Sections II & III - Development History & Community Support **100 points possible**

These sections examine how your community's economy has changed over time, and describes community improvements or economic development projects in the past 10 years. It also asks for information regarding what organizations are currently involved in promoting downtown, why you think your organization would be a successful Main Street program, and what the most important goals of your program would be.

Section IV – Organizational Capacity 75 points possible

This section asks for information about past volunteer efforts in your community, along with the structure and membership of the proposed Main Street board, and the role of your Main Street director.

Section V – Historic Preservation Ethic 75 points possible

This section examines what buildings are already listed on the National Register of Historic Places or what buildings are worthy of listing, along with the organizations in your community that are involved with preserving historic commercial structures.

Section VI – Characteristics of Downtown Business District **50 points possible**

This section looks at what types of potential financing districts, zoning ordinances, and preservation plans already exist; the number, ownership, and vacancy rates of commercial buildings downtown and the number and type of businesses downtown.

Section VII – Budget possible	100	points
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This section is critical. It outlines the expenditures of your Main Street program for three years, as well as the sources of income, services, and donations during that time.

Section VIII – Reporting of Key Statistics

This section is not scored.

Section IX – National Main Street Network Membership

This section is not scored.

Application Guidelines

General Format

Applications must be submitted using the format for the 2009 Montana Main Street application.

Applications are not scored based on presentation. However, a well-organized application does facilitate review. Keep your application materials securely contained. A binder or folder works best; binders are most secure and can be more easily organized. Attachments should be confined to an 8 ½" by 11" format. Items can be folded or reduced to fit this size.

Completing the Application

The application is designed to be completed by laypersons. One of the most effective ways to complete the application and build awareness of the Main Street program locally is to make multiple copies of the application and divide the application into sections which can be completed by members of the Main Street steering committee or organizing group. Collect the answers and transfer them to the original form, gathering the appropriate signatures where needed. Various other individuals or constituent groups can be involved with completing the application as well, most likely with the budget section.

Specific Application Instructions

I. Introductory Questions

Questions 1-12, please answer as directed.

II. Development History

Questions 1-4, please answer as directed.

III. Community Support

Questions 1-8, please answer as directed. One of the evaluation criteria is the demonstration of local support for the Main Street program. Please provide letters of support for your local program from citizens, businesses, property owners, corporations, civic groups, clubs, churches, financial institutions, media outlets, etc. In addition, resolutions of support should come from government, economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, and business associations. Letters and resolutions should be inserted at the end of the application in the order in which they are requested as attachments. Samples of resolutions are included at the end of this document.

IV. Organizational Capacity

Questions 1-4, please answer as directed.

V. Historic Preservation Ethic

Questions 1-4, please answer as directed. Complete this section in cooperation with the State Historical Preservation Office for greatest accuracy. ‘

<http://www.his.state.mt.us>

VI. Characteristics of Downtown Business District

Answer as directed.

VII. Budget

Each organization selected to participate in Montana Main Street is expected to maintain a financial commitment to the program for at least three years, and hire a paid executive director, who must work at least 20 hours per week. Each applicant should be prepared to invest the appropriate amount to ensure the success of its own Main Street program.

Use the table provided in the application to project expenditures for each of the three years.

In the “sources of income, services, and donations” table (also in the application), cash and in-kind contributions may be included as income. Sources of funds that are pledged or in hand should be listed as attachments at the end of the application. All public and private income and funding sources must be documented. The applicant organization must certify the amount of money in hand or contributions pledged exclusively for the operation of the local Main Street program.

Typical documentation includes a signed pledge form or letter from the donor confirming the amount or item donated, the duration of the contribution, date, and signature of the individual or duly authorized representative.

VIII. Reporting of Key Statistics

Submission of the application indicates your agreement to the reporting requirements.

IX. National Main Street Network Membership

Submission of the application indicates your agreement to joining the National Main Street Network and providing Montana Main Street with a membership I.D. number.

Attachments (Please insert these in the following order at the end of the application.)

1. Certification of Applicant Organization (must be notarized).
2. List of individuals who prepared the application. This list must contain the name of the contact person, his/her title or affiliation, mailing address, daytime phone number, and signature.
3. One city street map that outlines the proposed Main Street district, and historic districts or tax increment financing districts, if applicable.
4. Ten (10) photos (5x7 or larger) that represent the visual essence of the district's streetscape and the variety of structures in the district. Show representative types, styles, and uses. If your community has buildings on the National Historic Register, please include these buildings are part of the 10 required photos.
5. A timeline that realistically shows when a board of directors will be put together, when an executive director will be hired, and when volunteers for the four committees (organization, promotions, design, and economic restructuring) will be recruited.
6. One (1) copy of any existing promotional brochure of your downtown.
7. A copy of the community's annual promotional calendar or list of events.
8. Letters of financial commitment from local government, financial institutions, businesses, and individuals that indicate how much financial assistance is pledged or in-hand to operate a Main Street program. Cash or in-kind donations are considered income.
9. A letter indicating intent to hire a paid Main Street executive director from your city council and the new or existing organization designated to serve as the governing body for the local Main Street program and staff. The paid director must be hired for a minimum of 20 hours per week.
10. A copy of a resolution of support passed by the City Council.
11. A copy of a resolution of support adopted by the Chamber of Commerce, downtown merchant's organization, and/or economic development group.
12. Letters from business people and individuals to participate in the Main Street program.

Deadlines

- 1) May 1: Deadline for letter of intent to apply. This letter does not obligate a community to submit an official obligation, but rather gives the state Main Street program an idea of how many communities are interested in applying.
- 2) July 1: Deadline for receipt of applications. Applications must be postmarked no later than the close of business on Tuesday, July 1.
- 3) July: Advisory committee will review applications.
- 4) Early August: Applicant communities will be asked to come to Helena and give brief (15-20 minutes) presentations to the advisory committee.
- 5) Late August: Finalists will be selected and notified; 2-3 communities will be selected as newly designated Main Street communities. All applicants will be notified of the results by telephone and letter.
- 6) September: Announcement of newly designated Main Street communities. The official announcement will take place at the Montana Main Street conference in Butte.

Sample Letters and Resolutions

Samples of required resolutions and letters of support are included in the following pages. *These samples are intended to serve only as guides.* Adapt them to meet your own community's needs.

Sample Resolution

(For a City Council)

A resolution authorizing participation in the Main Street program and designating a city official to represent the city on the local nonprofit Main Street governing board of directors.

Whereas Montana Main Street has been created to assist communities to develop a public-private effort to revitalize their downtown "Main Street" areas and,

Whereas the Montana Department of Commerce will be selecting Montana communities to participate in the Montana Main Street program,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF

_____that the city:

Section 1. Endorses the submission of this application and agrees to participate in the development and financial support of the local Main Street program.

Section 2. Endorses the goal of economic revitalization of the Downtown within the context of the preservation and rehabilitation of its historic buildings.

Section 3. Will appoint a city official to represent the city on the local Main Street governing board of directors.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED THIS _____ DAY OF _____, _____.

ATTEST

MAYOR

CITY CLERK

SAMPLE RESOLUTION

(For a Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Association,
Economic Development Corporation, or similar organization(s))

A resolution supporting participation in the Main Street Program.

Whereas Montana Main Street has been created to assist communities to develop a public-private effort to revitalize their downtown areas and,

Whereas the Montana Department of Commerce will be selecting Montana communities to participate in the Montana Main Street Program,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF

(Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Association, etc.)

that the organization:

Section 1. Fully endorses the submission of this application and agrees to participate in the development and the financial support of the local Main Street program.

Section 2. Endorses the goal of economic revitalization of the Downtown within the context of the preservation and rehabilitation of its historic buildings.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED THIS _____ day of _____, _____.

President of Board

Executive Director/Manager

SAMPLE LETTER OF COMMITMENT

(To hire a Main Street Program Director)

We hereby declare that upon selection to participate in the Montana Main Street Program the Main Street _____ Program will conduct a search to
(City)
find and hire a (full or part-time) paid program director to coordinate the volunteers and activities of our local Main Street program.

We further commit to funding this position for a minimum of three years during the start-up phase with Montana Main Street.

(Signature of Mayor)

(Date)

(Signature of President of local
nonprofit organization or
steering committee
established to govern
the local Main Street program)

(Date)

SAMPLE LETTER OF INTENT TO PARTICIPATE

Business name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Type of Business:

_____ Retail
_____ Service
_____ Other

As a Downtown businessperson, I/we am/are aware of the Main Street Four Point Approach and the intent of [COMMUNITY NAME] to apply for participation in the Montana Main Street program.

I/we realize that to be successful, the community's application must include statements of support for and participation in the local Main Street program by businesses in the downtown. Therefore, should our community be selected for participation, I/we agree to participate to the best of our ability in the following ways (check all that apply):

_____ Make a financial investment in the program.

_____ Volunteer time for the program.

_____ Attend training on topics to be determined by Montana Main Street and the local program (i.e. window display, customer service, merchandising, etc.)

_____ Consider physical improvements to my/our business location.

_____ Participate in joint advertising activities.

_____ Participate in an annual planning meeting for the central business district.

_____ Other

I/we understand that this letter is intended to gauge the level of potential for a local program and is not legally binding.

Signature _____

Title _____

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE/DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION (letterhead)

SAMPLE LETTER OF INTENT TO PARTICIPATE

The Board of Directors of _____ Chamber of Commerce support (Community Name) application for participation in the Main Street program and agree to participate in no less than one joint activity in each of the four (4) program areas of Main Street, organization, economic restructuring, promotion and design, during the first eighteen months of participation in the program.

We further agree to participate in an annual planning retreat with the Main Street organization to identify areas of overlap and to assign responsibility.

Board President

Executive Director/Manager

Date

